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ELEMENTS

THE HISTORIES HIDDEN IN
THE PERIODIC TABLE

2019 IN REVIEW

THE BEST MOVIES OF
2019

EXHIBIT
A

Facing an impeachment inquiry, President Donald Trump made an irresponsible and foolish comment that could reasonably provoke violence among his most devout followers.

Two years ago, amid the maelstrom of Charlottesville and the outrage surrounding Donald Trump's subsequent praise for various neo-Nazi-adjacent protesters, it went largely unnoticed that the President followed those comments with a defense of Robert E. Lee. The Unite the Right rally had been called in response to the Charlottesville city council's decision to remove a statue of Lee from a park, and, on the second day of demonstrations, James Alex Fields, Jr., a twenty-year-old white supremacist, drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, injuring dozens of people and killing the thirty-two-year-old Heather Heyer.

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THE PERIODIC TABLE

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He went on to ask if Washington and Jefferson would be next. I wrote at the time that it was striking to see Trump and his then chief of staff, John Kelly, both Northerners, take up the cause of the apostate Lee. But, given that Trump's willingness to verbally assail his perceived enemies is equalled only by his willingness to pander to those whom he considers supporters, perhaps it should not have been surprising that a Queens-born politician would wind up embracing Southern Lost Cause denialism. Earlier this year, Trump reiterated that support, referring to Lee as "a great general, whether you like it or not. He was one of the great generals."

Trump returned to the topic of the Civil War yet again last weekend, when he tweeted a quote from a Baptist pastor's statement that to impeach Trump would render a "Civil War like fracture in this Nation from which our Country will never heal." Hyperbole is Trump's native tongue, but, even by that standard, it was a wildly grandiose claim to argue that not only would his impeachment echo throughout the nation a hundred and fifty-four years from now but also that American politics would continue to grapple with the implications of who stood on which side of the question, and museums and

entire fields of scholarship would be devoted to helping the country understand the roots of such a catastrophe. The entire narcissistic arc of the President's public life can be understood as a quest to force the world to reckon with Trump as a man of consequence, even if he is, in fact, a man bereft of ideas and original thought.

We tend to speak of the Civil War as a singular event that took place between 1861 and 1865, which was caused either by the expansion of slavery or an abstract argument over the principle of "states' rights," depending on where you stand politically. But the Civil War's origins don't lie in the politics of 1861; they're a product of the politics of

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THE HISTORIES HIDDEN IN
THE PERIODIC TABLE

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THE BEST MOVIES OF
2019

history to support that conclusion.

By comparison, Trump's problems are self-inflicted. He brought the freewheeling amorality with which he led the Trump Organization—an enterprise he continues to profit from—to the White House. (An amendment to Seward's speech that includes Trump would be titled "Irrepressible Conflicts of Interest.") He is not grappling with vast foundational questions. From the loftiest perch in American politics, Trump has spewed vitriol, trampled norms, provoked violence, nurtured racism and misogyny, invited foreign intervention into an American election, befriended adversaries, and alienated allies. He followed up his civil-war threat on Tuesday, tweeting, "I am coming to the conclusion that what is taking place is not an impeachment, it is a COUP, intended to take away the Power of the People, their VOTE, their Freedoms, their Second Amendment, Religion, Military, Border Wall, and their God-given rights as a Citizen of the United States of America!" It was a breathtakingly irresponsible and foolish comment that could reasonably provoke violence among his most devout followers. As the blog Lawfare noted this week, far-right militias are taking Trump's language about war and the possibility of a Democratic coup d'état seriously.

A hundred and six years separate the impeachment of Andrew Johnson and the near-impeachment of Richard Nixon. Twenty-four years later, in 1998, Bill Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives, and acquitted by the Senate. Should Trump be impeached, there will be, for the first time in the nation's history, a generation of Americans that has seen two impeachments in their lifetimes. That is itself a statement on how tumultuous the politics of this era are.

Nevertheless, civil war is not the primary concern that should be raised by the prospect of impeachment. Trump's potential to provoke volatile divisions is not limited to his

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THE HISTORIES HIDDEN IN
THE PERIODIC TABLE

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THE BEST MOVIES OF
2019

— or a premature and ignoble end to his nascent presidency could provoke him to use the military to lash out abroad. Baseline Trump is erratic and unpredictable. The thought of an agitated Trump under the pressure of potential impeachment further navigating the complexities of Iran or North Korea should be profoundly unsettling. The dark portent is not that Trump will inspire a reenactment of the central conflicts of America's past. It's that he will author a novel catastrophe all his own.



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THE HISTORIES HIDDEN IN
THE PERIODIC TABLE

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THE BEST MOVIES OF
2019

President, Volodymyr Zelensky, was made public Thursday morning, minutes before Joseph Maguire, the acting director of National Intelligence, testified before the House.

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